S. HRG. 109–173

# U.S. HISTORY: OUR WORST SUBJECT?

## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING ISSUES RELATING TO AMERICAN HISTORY, FOCUSING ON S. 860, TO AMEND THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AUTHORIZATION ACT TO REQUIRE STATE ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN UNITED STATES HISTORY AND CIVICS

JUNE 30, 2005

Printed for the use of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

22–340 PDF WASHINGTON : 2005

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2250 Mail: Stop SSOP, Washington, DC 20402–0001

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# U.S. HISTORY: OUR WORST SUBJECT?

**THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2005**

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT, COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:07 p.m., in room SD–430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Lamar Alexander, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Alexander, Kennedy, and Reed.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. Good afternoon. The Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood Development will come to order. Excuse me for being a minute or two late; I was presiding over a little bit of American history. The Senate is debating the Central American Free Trade Act, and I am sure this will be a good deal more interesting than that, with Mr. McCullough here.

I know Senator Ted Kennedy will be here. He is looking forward to coming. Other senators may come. We welcome all of you.

Here is how we will proceed. We have two panels of witnesses. Mr. McCullough is one panel, and then we have three witnesses after that. So I will make a brief opening statement. Senator Kennedy will do the same. And then we will invite David McCullough to say whatever he would like to say about our subject. We will have some questions and then we will try to allow him to leave by about 3:45 or in that neighborhood, if that fits your schedule. Because I know you have other responsibilities tonight at the National Archives, which I am looking forward to attending as well.

Monday is July 4th, Independence Day for the United States of America, and the sad fact is that for millions of young Americans, they don't know much about why we celebrate the 4th of July.

According to the National Assessment of Education Progress, which we call NAEP, and which I prefer to call the "Nation's Report Card" because it is the closest thing we have to that, fewer students have a basic understanding of American history than have a basic understanding of any other subject which we test, including math, science, and reading. So when you look at our national report card, American history is our worst subject.

That is why, on April 20th, Senator Kennedy and I introduced S. 860, the American History Achievement Act. This is part of our effort to put the teaching of American history and civics back in its rightful place in our school curriculum so our children can grow up

learning what it means to be an American. This is a modest bill. It provides for improved testing of American history and civics so we can determine where history is being taught well and where it is being taught not so well, so that improvements can be made.

We also know that when testing is focused on a specific subject, States and school districts are more likely to step up to the challenge and to improve performance. The American History Achievement Act gives the National Assessment Governing Board—we call it NAGB in Washington—the authority to administer a 10-State pilot study of the NAEP test in U.S. history in the year 2006. They already have that authority for reading, math, science, and writing.

This pilot program should collect enough data to obtain a State-by-State comparison on 8th and 12th grade students' knowledge and understanding of U.S. history. The data will allow us to know which States are doing a better job of teaching American history and allow other States to model their program on those that are working well. It will also put a spotlight on American history that should encourage States and school districts to improve their efforts at teaching the subject.

Teaching American history is a unique and special responsibility of our public schools. I can remember a meeting of educators in Rochester a few years ago, when I was president of the University of Tennessee. The then-president of Notre Dame University, Monk Malloy, was there. And he asked this question in a roomful of educators: What is the rationale for a public school? Well, there was an unexpected silence around the room, until Albert Shanker, the late president of the American Federation of Teachers, answered the question in this way. Mr. Shanker said the public school, the common school, was created to teach immigrant children the three R's and what it means to an American, with the hope that they would then go home and teach their parents.

From the founding of our country, we have understood how important it is for our citizens to understand the principles that unite us as a country. Other countries are united by their ethnicity. If you move to Japan, for example, you can't become Japanese, really. But Americans, on the other hand, are united by a few things in which we believe. And to become an American citizen, you raise your hand and take an oath and subscribe to and learn those principles. If there were no agreement on these principles, as Samuel Huntington has noted, we would be the United Nations instead of the United States of America.

Still, many children are growing up as civic illiterates, not knowing the basic principles that unite us. As Mr. Shanker pointed out, we cannot ignore the special mission of our public schools to teach our children what it means to be an American. And according to recent surveys, that is what the American people who pay the taxes want. Hart-Teeter recently conducted a poll of 1,300 adults. They asked what the principal goal of education ought to be. The top response was "producing literate, educated citizens who can participate in our democracy." Twenty-six percent of the respondents said that should be our principal goal. Teaching math, reading, and writing was selected by only 15 percent. And you can't be an educated participant in our democracy if don't know our history.

I have a longer statement that I will put in the record because I want to spend as much of the time as possible listening to our witnesses. But let me conclude my statement with this:

I hope that the legislation that Senator Kennedy and I have proposed and we are discussing today will play a part in a whole variety of activities that are taking place here in Congress with the goal of lifting up the importance of American history for new Americans, for our children, and, really, for all of us. It is part of a broader effort. Last year, Senator Kennedy and I joined with Senator Reed, the Democratic leaders, and many Republican senators as well, to pass the American History and Civics Education Act. It passed by unanimous vote here in the Senate. The purpose was to help begin to create summer academies for outstanding teachers and students of American history and civics.

The senator from New York, Senator Schumer, and I have introduced a bill to codify the oath of allegiance, which immigrants take when sworn in as new citizens. We want it to protect and honor in law just as the National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance are codified in law.

Our children are growing up ignorant of our Nation's history. Teaching our children what it means to be an American is one of the principal reasons we created the public school.

So it is right to put it back in its rightful place, and I look forward to our discussion today.

Now I would like to turn to Senator Kennedy, who is the ranking member of our committee and an enthusiastic participant in this effort. He and I don't agree on everything, but we sure agree on this. And he has a special passion for American history because he and his family are such an important part of it.

And to give credit where credit is due, it is his suggestion that brought Mr. McCullough here today. This hearing was scheduled for a couple of weeks earlier, and Ted said, well, since he is going to be here on the 30th, why don't we just move the hearing, invite him to come—and so David McCullough came.

So, Senator Kennedy, why don't I ask you to make your opening comments. And if you would like to introduce Mr. McCullough, I would welcome your doing that.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

Senator KENNEDY. Well, thank you very much, Senator Alexander.

I think, in listening to Chairman Alexander, I think just listening to him you can understand about his passion for this subject, and it has been infectious to all of us as one that loves history and cares deeply about it, learns from it, and also has listened to Dave McCullough on so many different occasions speak to it. We thank you, Senator Alexander, for your very, very strong leadership and all the things you are getting done. It is difficult around here to get many things done, and you have really demonstrated an ability to do it and have a lot of strong support for it. So, thank you so much.

We are going to miss Shelby Foote, aren't we, Dave McCullough? We lost one of the good friends, one of the great historians, one that I think inspired so many Americans to understand one of the

great times of American history, the Civil War. He was a very, very special person, special historian, and added immensely to America's understanding about the Civil War.

I think for anyone that questions whether Americans are interested in history, all they have to do is pick up the Best Seller List year after year and see Dave McCullough's name on it. And there is one that I am just about three-quarters of the way through, "1776," and I've had the good opportunity to read his other books, particularly "John Adams" and also "The Path Between the Seas." And the list goes on.

It always seems that Americans have a terrific thirst for history. I think that Dave McCullough has just reminded us of that. And if we really miss the opportunity to give children in this country the opportunity to read history and to understand history and—including civic responsibility as well; I think Lamar outlined that—we miss a very, very important responsibility that we have. We can't insist that every child is going to develop a love of history or an understanding, but we sure can do everything we can to give that opportunity to young people. That is what our bill is really all about.

We want to welcome Dave McCullough. As all of us know, we are fortunate in this Nation to have someone that has spent the time and the effort and energy to read and study and to help all of us understand better about what this country is about, what its values are about, what its challenges have been, and to give us the hope from those experiences to face the challenges that we have today. We are lucky to have him in Massachusetts as a resident. And we are proud to say that on a recent scoring for standards on history, Massachusetts got an A. So I am sure it is a great deal due to Dave McCullough. We are glad to have you here. We thank you very much for taking the time, being down here a good deal early to give us an opportunity to hear from you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Kennedy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for convening this important hearing. We're fortunate to have such a distinguished panel with us today to discuss how our schools can improve the teaching and learning of America's past. We're honored that one of the Nation's great historians—David McCullough—could join us this afternoon.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, I share your appreciation of the importance of history as the foundation for the Nation's continuing ideals and our schools can contribute immeasurably to each generation's commitment to those ideals. America's economy and security today require strong skills in math and science, and the No Child Left Behind Act supports the development of these skills. But our democracy and our future in the world depend on much more.

It's no surprise that readers in droves are turning to David McCullough's "1776." Anyone concerned about the quagmire in Iraq today can't help but be reassured that in the dark days of the Revolutionary War in 1776, we summoned the leadership to find our way out of that quagmire, and hopefully we can do it again. As George Santayana wrote in 1905, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Or, as H. G. Wells put it in 1921,

"Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe."

Instilling appreciation of America's past—teaching the values of liberty, justice, equality, and civic responsibility—should be an important mission of every school. Thanks to the efforts of large numbers of teachers of history and civics in classrooms throughout America, we're making progress.

According to the results of the most recent assessment by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 4th and 8th grade students are improving their knowledge of American history. Children are using primary sources and documents more often to explore history, and are being assigned historical and biographical readings by their teachers more frequently.

But much more remains to be done to advance their understanding of the subject. Students still consistently score lower on American history than on any other course. A recent study by Sheldon Stern—the Chief Historian Emeritus at my brother's Presidential Library in Boston—suggests that State standards for teaching American history need improvement. His research reveals that 22 States have American history standards that are either weak or lack clear chronology and appropriate political and historical context, or sufficient information about real events and people. As many as 9 States still have no standards at all for American history.

Good standards matter. They're the foundation for teaching and learning in every school. Every State should have creative and effective history standards. Massachusetts began to do so in 2000, through a joint review of history standards by teachers, administrators, curriculum coordinators, and university professors. After monthly meetings and 3 years of development and revision, the State released a new framework for teaching history in 2003. Today, our standards in both American history and world history receive the highest marks.

Higher academic achievement in reading and math obviously do not have to come at the expense of subjects such as history. Students can build literacy and number skills in a history or geography course too. Interdisciplinary approaches are consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act's promise of high quality education for each student.

Achieving this goal requires better teacher preparation, better certification, and better support for new teachers. Greater investments are needed to improve the quality—not just the quantity—of student assessments. We must continue to support efforts under the No Child Left Behind Act such as the *Teaching of Traditional American History* program, to help teachers improve instruction.

It's a privilege to join our Chairman, Senator Alexander, again in this Congress in introducing the American History Achievement Act, to establish a strong national commitment to teaching history and civics in the Nation's public schools. It will lay the foundation for higher standards and more effective ways of teaching about the Nation's past, and provides a more frequent and effective analysis of how well America's students are learning these important subjects.

We've included civic education in the bill as well. The strength of our democracy and the health of our communities depend on informed, caring, and active citizens. We cannot protect our freedom without emphasizing the character of our citizens.

Every young person should have an education that provides them with the skills they need to be good citizens, such as knowledge of Government, law, and democracy, and the ability to understand and analyze important issues of the day. We need high standards for civic education, more opportunities for internships and service-learning, and stronger partnerships between schools and community organizations to involve young people more fully in the life of their communities.

Today's students will be better citizens in the future if they learn about our history and learn the skills needed to participate in our democracy.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. McCullough.

**STATEMENT OF DAVID McCULLOUGH, HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR, WEST TISBURY, MA**

Mr. MCCULLOUGH. Senator Alexander, Senator Kennedy, I am very grateful and proud to be invited to say some things that have been on my mind for a good long time. And I want to start by emphasizing, I think, that our teachers are the most important citizens in our society. I don't think there is anyone doing work of greater value or work that will have more long-lasting effect than our teachers. I have a son who is a teacher, of whom I am extremely proud—a public school teacher. I know the difficulties that people in teaching have today, I know the opportunities there are, and I know how frustrating and sometimes discouraging the teacher's life can be today.

Having said that, I think that we are sadly failing our children and have been for a long time, almost a generation, almost 25 years. And I see it personally when I visit as a guest lecturer or visiting professor at colleges and universities all over the country. I know the studies that have been made, the surveys, the tests that have been run on seniors in supposedly the top 50 universities in the country, and how abysmally they score. And I am convinced that what you are doing is the right thing. I think to bring testing, assessment of performance in the grade schools and high schools, public schools nationwide, is long overdue. And I certainly would second adamantly any further success that you can do from the Federal level to make this happen.

I think the problem is essentially that we have been teaching our teachers the wrong way. We have too many teachers who have graduated with degrees in education, and they are assigned to teach history or biology or mathematics or English literature, and they don't know the subject. Now, there is progress being made concerning this. Former Senator David Boren, a colleague of yours, now the president of the University of Oklahoma, has taken a major step. You can no longer graduate from the University of Oklahoma as a prospective teacher without having majored in a subject. You can't major in just education.

The teacher who doesn't know the subject is up against a big handicap in three ways, and consequently, therefore, the students

are. Anybody trying to teach a subject they don't know has right away got a problem. But it is also impossible to love what you don't know, just as it is impossible to love someone you don't know. And we all know from our experience in school, those of us who were lucky enough to have wonderful teachers, the best teachers were the teachers that were really excited about what they were teaching. Their enthusiasm, their affection for what they were teaching was tangible.

Miss Schmeltz, 6th grade: "Come over here and look in this microscope. You're going to get a kick out of this." And you did, and you would never forget it.

Two of my high school history teachers, Walter Jones, Robert Abercrombie, wonderful teachers, were enthusiastic about what they were teaching every day in every class.

There was a great teacher of teachers at the University of Pittsburgh, Margaret MacFarland, professor of child psychology, whose most famous disciple, if you will, was Fred Rogers, Mr. Rogers, who reached more children than any teacher who ever lived. And Fred was someone I knew because of my work in Public Television. And he acknowledged openly to anyone that all of what he did was based on the teachings of Margaret MacFarland, which were, in essence, attitudes aren't taught, they're caught.

It is the attitude of the teacher that is caught by the student, particularly at the grade school level. If the teacher is enthusiastic, if she or he loves what she is teaching, the child gets it immediately. And her admonition to teachers was, Show them what you love.

So if a young person majors in art or music or history or mathematics or 19th century English literature, and can convey that love, that enthusiasm, that is the biggest step that can possibly be made in how we improve the teaching of all subjects.

Now, if you don't know the subject, you find it hard to know it well enough to teach it, you don't love it, there is a third and very serious problem, and that is you are much more dependent on the textbooks. And the textbooks, alas, are by and large very dreary. Some are superb. Daniel Boorstin's one-volume "History of the United States" is one of the best there is. Joy Hakim's relatively new multivolume history of the United States is superb.

But others are dismal almost beyond describing. It is as if they had been written to kill any interest that a student might have in history. You read some of them and you wonder, Do they send children home with these as an act of punishment?—you know, you weren't very good today so you have to spend an hour a night reading this book.

Now, for a long time it was said that children don't like to read; modern-day children don't like to read. And this was gospel among educators and publishers of books for education. So therefore they reduced the vocabulary, they dumbed it down. They increased the size of the print. They put in more illustrations and graphs and graphic art and gimmicks to try to pull them into reading the books that supposedly they don't like to read.

And then, along came Harry Potter and blew all of that conventional wisdom right out of the water. Of course they will read something that is well-written. Of course they will be drawn to a

book that is compelling to you or me or to anyone else. And I like to stress that the author of Harry Potter doesn't dumb down the vocabulary in the slightest. And the sad part of it is there are wonderful things that children could be reading today in history in the schools at every level.

Now, because of the No Child Left Behind program, sadly, history is being put on the back burner or taken off the stove altogether in many schools, if not most schools, with the argument that we have to concentrate on reading and mathematics and science. Well, fine, to concentrate on the reading all they want. But they don't just have to read what is conventionally seen as literature. They can read the literature of history. And it is a very simple thing to start putting together the kinds of wonderful reading that many of us grew up on, that could be easily introduced to the No Child Left Behind reading program.

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere; Stephen Vincent Benet's "John Brown's Body"; Frederick Douglass's autobiography; Ben Franklin's autobiography; the speeches of Chief Joseph; Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address; Grant's memoirs; selections from Shelby Foote and Barbara Tuchman; the wonderful prose of Francis Parkman, "The Oregon Trail." The list could be indefinite. Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." On and on. These are all not only major events in the history of our country, they are great literature. They have survived the test of time, just as literature of a conventional kind has. And this could be exciting. This could bring young people and their teachers into a love of history, which is essential.

If we raise generation after generation of young Americans who are historically illiterate, we are running a terrible risk for this country. You could have amnesia of a society, which is as detrimental as amnesia of an individual. And of course, if people begin to think that all that we have, all the blessings—our freedoms, our art, our music, our literature, our great institutions, the faith, the creed we have that has held us together for 229 years in equality, and the idea that all men are created equal, the ideal of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—if all of that seems to be something that just fell out of the sky, that it is just part of the natural world and that nobody struggled for it, there is no story behind it, then we are really, in my view, in the soup.

Jefferson said it perfectly. He said, "Any Nation that expects to be ignorant and free expects what never was and never can be." Our very freedoms depend on education, and that is why education has been a sustaining thing, one of the great guidelines all through our history, from the time of the founders down to the present.

And we are falling down. The literacy rate in Massachusetts in 1776, I am sorry to say, was higher than it is today. We are raising children who don't know who George Washington was. Mount Vernon is about to build an $84 million visitors center so that when those little Americans get off those yellow school buses, they can have a quick indoctrination to know who George Washington was before they walk up the path to Mount Vernon, so that the visit to that house will mean something to them.

This is no joke. And it isn't just apparent among students. It can be apparent among grownups. I had lunch 1 day with an editor of

the op-ed page of a major newspaper in this country, a graduate of Yale University. And she was quite upset because she had just been to the Vietnam Memorial. And she said, "I'm sorry if I seem upset. I've just been to see the Vietnam Memorial." And she said, "Have you seen it?" And I said, "Indeed I have." She said, "Did you find it upsetting?" I said, "I certainly did, but I have to tell you that I went there on the same day that I went out to visit Antietam." And she said, "What is Antietam?"

I said, "Well, maybe you're from the South and know it as Sharpsburg." She said, "No, I have no idea what you're talking about." I said, "There are 15,000 names on the Vietnam Memorial for a war that lasted 11 years. In 1 day at Antietam, which is a 40-minute drive from where you're sitting, there were 23,000 casualties. On a single day. And you've never heard of it. And you went to the same university I did. What's happening?"

Well, one of the things that is happening is you can go to Yale, Harvard, Stanford, any number of the finest institutions that we are so rightfully proud of, and not major in any history whatsoever. It isn't required. One president of a university—a college, I should say—who is himself a historian, was asked why don't you require history? He said, "It's not popular." Well, I think that is a rule of judgment or a means of judgment we ought to dispense with.

Now, will knowing history make one a better citizen? Absolutely. Will knowing history give us a sense of who we are and how we got to be where we are, and why we are the way we are? Absolutely. But history is also a source of pleasure. It is a source of infinite pleasure, the way art and music and literature are. And to deny our children that pleasure is to deny them a means of extending and enlarging the experience of being alive. Why would anyone want to be provincial in time anymore than to be provincial in space when the whole realm of the human experience is there for our enjoyment as well as our enlightenment?

Harry Truman said the only new thing in the world is the history you don't know. Daniel Boorstin, who wrote the great one-volume history textbook of the United States and who was himself a front-rank historian and the Librarian of Congress, said trying to plan for the future without a sense of the past is like trying to plant cut flowers. And we are trying to plant thousands of cut flowers. And it isn't going to work.

I think, personally, I think that we human beings are naturally interested in the past. All the great childhood stories began, "Once upon a time, long, long ago." We all want to go back to know how it was back then, who did what and why. I don't think it is coincidental that the two most popular movies of all time are historical. They may not be historically accurate in total, but they are historically powerful: Gone With the Wind and Titanic.

History is a natural human interest. And to make it boring, to make it dull, to make it insipid or sleep-inducing is really a shame, a tragedy. The great thing about history is it is about life. Every time you scratch the surface of the supposedly dead past, you find life, and you learn. Samuel Elliot Morrison, the great Harvard historian, said, "History teaches us how to behave."

I feel so strongly about this, but I also know that the problem can be solved. There is no trick to it. Barbara Tuchman said you

can do it; she explained how to do it in two words: Tell stories. And particularly to young people.

And I would like to say in conclusion, in my view the concentration of effort should be put on children at the grade school level, 4th, 5th, 6th grade. If you can catch them then, you have them for life. And I know from experience that it works. Those little minds are like sponges, and they want to learn. We all know they can learn a language just like that, much faster than the rest of us. They can learn anything just like that.

I taught a class one morning in Montgomery, Alabama, of 6th graders, explaining to them how the locks at the Panama Canal work, how a ship the size nearly of the Empire State Building can be lifted up 80 feet above sea level with nothing more than the power of gravity. And they got it. They understood it faster than an adult audience would. And I suddenly thought to myself, You could teach these people anything. They will go just as fast as you want to take them.

So it isn't that this is a problem we can't solve. This is a problem we absolutely can solve. Go back to some basics, back to a good liberal arts education for everybody who teaches in our public schools, number one. And encourage those who want to teach history to major in history. And encourage those who teach history to give their students things to read that they themselves, all the rest of us, would also want to read. And never underestimate their capacity to be pulled in by wonderful writing about great subjects.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. McCullough. I will now take 5 minutes or so and then turn to Senator Kennedy.

You mentioned the No Child Left Behind legislation and its emphasis on reading, math, and science. And I mentioned in my remarks about how Albert Shanker had pointed out that the public school, the common school was created for a public purpose. I mean, school could teach math, science, and reading, but a common, public school has a special purpose. And part of that, he thought, was to help teach immigrant children, especially, what it means to be an American, with the hope they go home and teach their parents.

Now, as we look for ways to do that from Washington, we have to be a little careful. For example, with No Child Left Behind, our emphasis on reading, science, and math may be at the expense of U.S. history, even though there is a section in the No Child Left Behind bill that Senator Byrd, put in, which authorizes $100 million a year for what he called traditional American history. So that is also part of No Child Left Behind.

And we have worked, as I mentioned, on summer academies for outstanding teachers and students. And this legislation we are talking about today is to give States the option of comparing Tennessee's high school seniors and 8th graders with Massachusetts's high school seniors and 8th graders, as a way of putting a focus on it.

I want to ask you if you have any other suggestions of how Federal resources can be used to encourage the teaching of American history without turning us into a national school board here in Washington, which we don't want to be. And I want to specifically ask you about an idea we have talked a little about before, and

that is the idea of using our national monuments, historical homes—the Adams home, for example, The Hermitage in Tennessee—these places are all over America. They are often part of our National Parks system. You often talk about bringing history alive. I wonder if you have thought any more about the idea of combining some of our Federal monuments and institutions in places with putting a new and renewed emphasis on the teaching of American history?

Mr. MCCULLOUGH. I have indeed. I would like also to say I don't really think that the basis of our public school system was to teach new Americans, immigrants. The basis of our public school system began before the Constitution of the United States was written. It began with the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which is the oldest written constitution still in use in the world today, written by John Adams, in which there is a paragraph unlike anything that had ever been written before, saying that it shall be the duty of the Government to teach everybody, to provide public education for everybody. And then he went on to list what those institutions should teach, and he listed just about everything—science, literature, history, natural history, on and on—and that these should be cherished by society.

Washington said that real happiness could only come through education. They all said it over and over again, public education is essential. Jefferson's establishment of the University of Virginia was what he considered one of the great life works of his whole career.

I think that the National Parks system, which has something like 300 historic sites, could be the vehicle, could be the venue, if you will, of a whole program of summer seminars for teachers, where they would come to Gettysburg or the Adams House at Quincy, or Monticello, or Mount Vernon, or The Hermitage, or the historic sites west of the Mississippi, in California, to learn about that place but, in learning about that place, learn much about a whole segment of the American story—which would not only enlarge and improve their interest in and ability to convey the details and the importance of those subjects, it would also set them in a position to be far more interesting and stimulating, even inspiring, to their students when they bring their students to that site.

This is relatively inexpensive because the sites are there and the on-site Park Service people, the guides and historians, are superb historians. Sometimes they are the leading expert on that subject. So that we have a built-in wealth of marvelous historic sites and we have a built-in wealth of on-site people who know what they are talking about.

One other quick point, Senator. I don't think we should just leave the job to the Federal Government or to the teachers. I think in many ways, as my daughter Dorie Lawson said at dinner one night to us, the trouble with American education is us, we who are parents and grandparents. We have to do more to talk about history with our children. We have to reinstate the dinner table conversation. We have to reinstate dinner.

[Laughter.]

And we have to take them to those historic sites ourselves. Don't wait for the school trip.

Senator Kennedy has been taking his nieces and nephews and many of his family to historic places year after year. It is a wonderful family tradition. It ought to be a family tradition everywhere. Because those trips can change your life.

I was taken to Monticello by a school pal and his mother and father on spring vacation when I was about 14. And I know it changed my life. It is what started me down the trail in my interest in history. And we should be giving our children the books that we liked when we were just discovering history, at whatever level. That should all be part of it.

And you who are people in public prominence can do wonders individually, not just in your role as representatives in the Government. You can set a standard conspicuously of parental or grandparental involvement in what ought to be something we all enjoy talking about.

Now, some young families will say, You don't understand, there is not enough time anymore for that. I can't find that acceptable. When you read that the average American family spends 3 to 4 hours a day watching television, surely there is time to have a common interest with your children or grandchildren about the history of this country.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. As I turn it over to Senator Kennedy, your point about the national parks and the monuments being inspiring, I know that as a fact, after Senator Kennedy's most recent visit to the church in Richmond with his family, where Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson and George Washington walked through the door shoulder-to-shoulder and Patrick Henry made his famous speech, Ted nearly tackled me on the Senate floor the next week to tell me about it and how exciting it was to him and to the members of his family to go.

Senator Kennedy?

Senator KENNEDY. Well, thank you. Thank you so much again, David, for reminding us all about what is possible in this area. You know, it is interesting, that back in 2001 we did have history listed as a required standard in the Senate version of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That was one of the subjects. But in the conference of the No Child Left Behind Act, it was dropped. I was just talking with my staff about the reasons for it. But I can tell you, we will reconsider history standards in the next reauthorization in 2007.

I think one of the things that I have listened to you talk about, the parks that we have and how we ought to get the teachers tied into this and these summer programs, I am going to talk to my chairman, to see if we can try and develop some kind of summer programs. Because we have these parks, as you well know, in Massachusetts—you mentioned the Adams, we have Lexington Park, you can go down to New Bedford and the magnificent parks down there that go back, the Whaling Museum—and we have them really scattered, as you pointed out, across the country. And I think we ought to try to do something.

I think for us, getting the States to develop these standards is enormously important, because to get the teachers to really pay attention to history and civics as a priority in school curriculum, this

is where it really starts. This is part of the underlying Alexander and Kennedy legislation.

You have been so eloquent on this subject, but what we need is continued upgrading of these teachers in these courses. How we can get the professional training we do require in the No Child if people are going to be graduates and teach us in the subjects in which they are going to teach. But this has to be a continuing process, I imagine, from what you are saying.

You mentioned you get these good teachers. And while you were speaking about your good teachers, I was thinking about mine. I was lucky enough to have Arthur Holcombe, who wrote "Our More Perfect Union" when I was at college. He described the Constitutional Convention, and every student felt that they were there. It was unbelievable that that kind of learning—that everyone that would leave that course could hardly wait to go over to the library. We need continuing professional development, too, for these teachers.

I think they want it, they need it, but we don't do it terribly well. And that is something that we have to give some focus on.

I just want to thank you very much. It has been a very important challenge for us. I think Senator Alexander is up to it, and I will certainly be there as a spear carrier.

Mr. MCCULLOUGH. I would like to just add one more point. I am very optimistic about what can be done. I think the problem is very serious, and we have let it drag on much too long. But I know that these programs work. I am involved with the National Council for History Education, the NCHE, which was started by Theodore Rabb from Princeton and Kenneth Jackson from Columbia, two of our front-ranked historians. And the idea was to help improve the teaching of the teachers. And every summer, we have had seminars or clinics, call them what you will, where several hundred teachers come together for about 2 weeks and they get involved, not just by hearing people speak about the art of teaching and what sources and books and so forth can be used, but the teachers themselves do some actual research. They get their hands dirty in the process of history, in the excitement of—detective-case excitement of history.

And it never fails to work. They come away absolutely thrilled with the possibilities of what they can do in the classroom. And we have had nothing but volunteer professors, teachers, lecturers for years now, 15–20 years. And I know that if a program with the Park Service were to be established you could get the best people in the country to come and participate as an act of patriotism or citizenship. It isn't going to cost a great deal, and it works. It works.

And we can change it. When you see what some programs are doing in colleges and universities, there is no question it can be turned around.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, maybe Senator Kennedy and I can put our heads together and make that our next little project. As you mentioned, there are already a number of summer programs. The presidential academies are just getting started. The National Endowment for the Humanities had a teachers program at The Hermitage, which I attended last year, same kind of thing. But we

could, at a relatively small expense, we could lift those up. And my experiences with the Governor's Schools that many States have is that a 2 week program for teachers fits the teachers' schedule very nicely and offers an inspiring opportunity that livens up the rest of the school year and infects them for another 3 or 4 years, when they go back to their schools. This infects other teachers. It is a benefit, really, that teachers don't have. Much of teachers' professional education is really pretty dull. It is a lot like legal professional education.

Mr. MCCULLOUGH. And they are wonderful people. Senator Byrd invited me to come down and speak to a conference of teachers in West Virginia a few years ago. And I went—and I don't know how many hundreds of teachers were there, filled a huge auditorium. And the enthusiasm, the vitality of that group of people—I came back buoyed up. I don't know whether I had any effect on them, but they had a huge effect on me. And I think that is a well of commitment and enjoyment in the subject matter that is just waiting to be tapped everywhere.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. McCullough, thank you for changing your schedule and being with us today.

Mr. MCCULLOUGH. Thank you, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. I have "1776" on my bedside table. Senator Kennedy's a little ahead of me in terms of reading it.

Mr. MCCULLOUGH. Well, the test isn't until September, so you are okay.

[Laughter.]

Senator ALEXANDER. We will now welcome the second panel to come up. Let me introduce all three of our guests and invite each of you, if you will, to summarize your comments in about 5 minutes. If you can do that, and then that will give us a chance to ask questions and to discuss the legislation and other things you would like to say.

I am going to make my introduction brief. Charles Smith is executive director of the National Assessment Governing Board. He runs the 26-member National Assessment Governing Board, which Congress established in 1988. Mr. Smith and I have known each other a long time. He has a distinguished career in Tennessee, in education, as a university president, as chancellor, as commissioner of education. I am delighted that he is joining us today.

Stephanie Norby is director for the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies. She manages Smithsonian's Smithsonian-wide museum education programs for museum professionals and educators. She has 26 years of experience in education as a classroom teacher, school district administrator, and museum educator. And we welcome you.

And I want to invite Senator Reed, if he would like to introduce our other witness and make any comments he would like, and then we will go in the order of introduction and ask each of you to present your testimony.

Senator?

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing.

I am delighted to be able to introduce James Parisi, who is testifying this afternoon. Jim is the field representative for the Rhode

Island Federation of Teachers and Health Care Professionals. He has worked there for over 10 years. And he is also working to enhance the study of American history and civic education nationally in Rhode Island. He brings to this hearing an important perspective as he is helping Rhode Island develop standards. In fact, yesterday, legislation passed the Rhode Island General Assembly that will set standards for history and civic education, which is a result of his efforts.

I am pleased that Rhode Island, under Jim's urging and with his great advocacy, is taking this step forward. And I want to commend you for your efforts, Jim.

I am pleased Jim could be here today, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to his testimony.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Reed. Mr. Parisi, welcome.

Mr. Smith?

**STATEMENTS OF CHARLES E. SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD; STEPHANIE L. NORBY, DIRECTOR, SMITHSONIAN CENTER FOR EDUCATION AND MUSEUM STUDIES; AND JAMES PARISI, FIELD REPRESENTATIVE, RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed. It is a great pleasure to be here today, and I appreciate the invitation.

I also think I would be remiss if I didn't note for the record of this committee hearing that the role that Chairman Alexander has played in the development of the organization that I have held, that he and Senator Kennedy were two very key players back in the late 1980s, when a blue ribbon committee was commissioned to take a look at National Assessment of Education Progress. And out of that set of deliberations and recommendations came the recommendation to Congress that the board I serve be created and that there be State-based NAEP and that there also would be a role played by the governing board that I serve to set the standards, to develop the frameworks. And all of that has led us to where we are today.

So, Mr. Chairman, I commend you for what you have done. I should say, too, that Senator Kennedy took that ball from the committee and was the key sponsor, the key supporter of the legislation that resulted in the creation of our board. We are deeply grateful for all that you have done.

Let me say at the outset that responding to the needs of Congress and other policymakers at all levels of Government is our reason for being. You have continually looked to the Nation's Report Card as a reliable and valid source of useful data on the academic performance of our Nation's students. And let me assure you that we take that charge very seriously.

Mr. Chairman, you have asked that my testimony address the provisions of S. 860 and provide results from the NAEP surveys in U.S. history and civics. In written materials provided to this subcommittee prior to this meeting, considerable detail has been provided. This afternoon, my comments will focus on just a few high-

lights to meet the constraints that the chairman set in regard to time.

Let me say that your bill captures the essence of the importance of our Nation's youth knowing and understanding who we are as a people, how we have gotten to where we are in our 200-plus-year history, and the responsibilities that we bear as citizens of this great country. The bill also underscores, in my judgment, the troubling reality of significant deficiencies in what American students know about their Nation's history and their civic duties.

It is essential, I believe, that policymakers at all levels have access to the outcomes of teaching and learning in these two subjects. The Nation's Report Card has a basic responsibility to shine the light on results, and I believe it has done just that—in the U.S. history in 1994, in 2001; and in civics in 1998. I might say, too, and I will say a little bit more about it later, both subjects will be assessed again next year.

As is noted in the bill before you today, the student achievement results of previous NAEP assessments are cause for great concern. Your bill specifies in some detail some examples of these deficiencies. What students don't know about U.S. history and civics, we recognize, is significant. We have to be troubled by a finding from the 2001 U.S. history assessment that 57 percent of 12th graders scored below the basic level of achievement, a percentage unchanged from the 1994 assessment.

Failure to achieve basic means that the majority of 12th graders were unable to identify the significance of many people, places, events, dates, ideas, and documents in U.S. history. It also means that they fail to relate relevant experience from the past in understanding contemporary issues. The list goes on, and in the written testimony that has been provided to you, we provide some more examples.

In civics, the picture that emerged from the 1998 assessment is not quite as gloomy as that for history, but it is also a cause for concern nonetheless. More than a third of the 12th graders fell below the basic level of achievement in civics. This means that more than one in three members of this Nation's class of 1998, a group approaching or at voting age at the time they took the assessment, did not demonstrate an understanding of the principles of American Government, its structure of checks and balances, and the roles of political parties and interest groups on our democracy.

I might say and should say that in both U.S. history and civics, the news was not all bad. On the positive side, 4th and 8th graders in both subjects achieved at or above basic in percentages significantly higher than those of the 12th graders. Also, the findings in U.S. history showed that the scaled scores for both 4th and 8th graders increased between 1994 and 2001. The position results were tempered, though, by the finding that in both subjects the percentages of students achieving at or above basic declined in the progression from 4th to 12th grades.

Also, at all three grades, in both subjects, the percentage below basic is much higher in general for minority students than for white students.

In closing, I offer just three quick comments. Point one regards Finding 3 of the acts that states, and I quote: America's past en-

compasses great leaders and great ideas that contribute to our shared heritage and to the principles of freedom, equality, justice, and opportunity for all.

Mr. Chairman, the results of NAEP assessments raise serious questions about how well these noble principles are being transmitted to and absorbed by rising generations of young adults. The disparate performance between minority and nonminority students in U.S. history and in civics is egregious. It poses challenges to our Nation's progress in achieving those very principles.

Point two. The current NAEP legislation makes the governing board responsible for determining the schedule of subject and grades to be assessed by NAEP. I am pleased to report that the governing board adopted last month a schedule of assessments that provides for the assessment of U.S. history and civics once every 4 years into the future. As noted earlier, U.S. history and civics assessments in grades 4, 8, and 12 at the national level were already scheduled for 2006. Under the new schedule, assessments in these two subjects at all three grades will also be conducted in 2010 and 2014.

And finally, point three. The American History Achievement Act provides for trial State assessments in at least 10 States that are geographically diverse. Because a number of prerequisite steps are required in the year before a State level assessment is conducted, funding must be provided both in the year before and the year of the assessment, which your bill does indeed provide for. These prerequisite steps include identification of participating States, drawing a sample of schools and students, working directly with the schools to provide an orientation to the assessment, and printing test booklets. Therefore, there is reason to believe that, with adequate notice, appropriate outreach, and targeted follow-up, achieving voluntary participation of 10 States at grade 8, we believe, is a reasonable and attainable goal.

However, in contrast to NAEP's 15 year experience securing participation for State-level assessments in grades 4 and 8, NAEP has never conducted State-level assessments at grade 12. We know that at the national level, obtaining the cooperation of high schools to participate in 12th grade NAEP is more challenging than at grades 4 and 8, and that participation rates are much lower at grade 12 than at grades 4 and 8. Obviously, however, at the direction of Congress and with the provision of the appropriations that are sufficient and timely, you may be assured that NAGB will make every effort to address this issue effectively.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, it is commendable that you, Senator Kennedy have introduced this act and that you are conducting this hearing. I, again, appreciate this opportunity to speak and, at the appropriate time, I will be happy to respond to questions.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Smith.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLES E. SMITH

Chairman Alexander and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the American History Achievement Act. I am Charles E. Smith, Executive Director of the National Assessment Governing Board. The Governing Board was created in legislation introduced in 1988 by Senator Kennedy, developed

to reauthorize the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The legislation also provided for the first-ever state-by-state NAEP results and for standards-based reporting by NAEP. Senator Kennedy's bill implemented recommendations made in 1987 by a national study group charged with improving NAEP's usefulness. The study group, comprised of highly respected leaders in education, was chaired by then Tennessee governor Lamar Alexander. One of the members of the study group was the First Lady of Arkansas at the time, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

It is with a profound sense of appreciation for your and Senator Kennedy's continuing support for NAEP's role in providing information useful to educators and policymakers, that I appear before you today.

Mr. Chairman, you have asked that my testimony address the provisions of S. 860—the American History Achievement Act—and results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress in U.S. history and civics. I will provide selected NAEP results first. The Findings section of the American History Achievement Act already includes a listing of data drawn from the 2001 U.S. history assessment and I will augment those results. The remainder of my testimony will address the provisions of S. 860.

**NAEP Results in U.S. History and Civics**

Recent events remind us that our ability to survive as a Nation depends on our belief in the value of our purposes as a Nation. Schools are the primary means for transmitting these purposes to each new generation—through instruction in U.S. history and civics. It is essential that students leave school with a deep understanding of the ideas, traditions, and democratic values that bind us with our fellow citizens and that serve as a compass that guides our societal and individual decisions.

Likewise, it is essential to shine a light on the outcomes of teaching and learning in U.S. history and civics and on successful or promising instructional practices. Mr. Chairman, you and the subcommittee are to be commended for the light that will be shined on these topics by conducting this important hearing today.

**Achievement in U.S. History**

The NAEP results in U.S. history for 1994 and 2001 and in civics for 1998 present a somewhat mixed but troubling portrait of student achievement in these subjects. The NAEP achievement results listed in the Findings section of the American History Achievement Act indicate that U.S. students have significant deficiencies in the knowledge of our Nation's history. Of particular concern is the finding from the 2001 U.S. history assessment that 57 percent of 12th graders scored below the Basic level in U.S. history and that this was unchanged from the 1994 assessment.

There are three achievement levels reported by NAEP: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The Basic level represents partial mastery of the knowledge and skills prerequisite for the Proficient level. The Proficient level denotes competency over challenging subject matter. The Advanced level signifies superior performance.

The results in U.S. history in 2001 by achievement level and grade are displayed in Table 1:

*TABLE 1.—PERCENTAGE AT ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS BY GRADE*

NAEP U.S. History Assessment 2001

| | Below Basic | Basic | Proficient | Advanced |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 4 | 33 | 49 | 16 | 2 |
| Grade 8 | 36 | 48 | 15 | 2 |
| Grade 12 | 57 | 32 | 10 | 1 |

*Totals by grade may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Please note that, as the student grade level increases, the percentage below Basic increases and the percentage at Proficient decreases. At 4th grade, 33 percent are below Basic; at 8th grade, 36 percent; and at 12th grade, 57 percent. At the Proficient level, the percentages are 16, 15, and 10, respectively, for 4th, 8th, and 12th grade.

To illustrate the meaning of these results, please consider what it means for 57 percent of 12th graders not to have reached the Basic level on the U.S. history assessment. At the Basic level in U.S. history at the 12th grade, student responses indicate the ability to:

• identify the significance of many people, places, events, dates, ideas, and documents in U.S. history;

• recognize the importance of unity and diversity in our social and cultural history;
• understand America's changing relationships with the rest of the world;
• relate relevant experience from the past in understanding contemporary issues;
• understand the role of evidence in making an historical argument.

This means that the majority of 12th graders did not know, for example: (1) that the Monroe Doctrine expressed opposition to European colonization in the Americas at the early part of the 19th century; (2) how Government spending during the Great Depression affected the economy; and (3) that the Soviet Union was an ally of the U.S. in World War II.

However, there were some positive signs in the NAEP results. The average score of 4th graders increased from 205 to 209 and of 8th graders from 259 to 262 between 1994 and 2001. The gains for 4th graders between 1994 and 2001 were for the lowest performing students, that is, those at the 10th and 25th percentiles. At 8th grade, gains were found for students at the 25th, 75th and 90th percentiles. However, at the 12th grade, there were no differences in achievement between 1994 and 2001 at any point along the performance distribution.

Other positive signs were in the narrowing of differences in average score by race/ethnicity. At the 4th grade there was a 7 point narrowing of the average score between white and African-American students between 1994 and 2001. At the 12th grade there was a 7 point narrowing of the average score between white and Hispanic students. But at the 8th grade, the achievement gap between these groups was unchanged.

Although the narrowing of average score differences between minority and non-minority student demographic groups is positive, the differences when looking at the percentage below Basic in 2001 are stark and worrisome.

*TABLE 2.—PERCENTAGE AT STUDENTS BELOW BASIC BY GRADE AND RACE*

NAEP U.S. History Assessment 2001

| | White | African American | Hispanic | Native American | Asian/Pacific Islander |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 4 | 21 | 56 | 58 | 47 | 29 |
| Grade 8 | 25 | 62 | 60 | 50 | 32 |
| Grade 12 | 51 | 80 | 74 | 66 | 47 |

There are important observations to share about the data in Table 2. First, at grades 4 and 8, the percentage below Basic is much higher in general for minority students than for white students, and twice as high or more for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students than for white students. As with the overall results displayed in Table 1, the percentage below Basic increases as the grade increases for each respective group. At grade 12, the percentage below Basic for any group should be viewed as unacceptable, but the results for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students, respectively, at 80 percent, 74 percent, and 66 percent below Basic should be viewed as devastating.

**Achievement in Civics**

I will now turn to the NAEP civics results. The results from the civics assessment in 1998 also indicate that improvement is needed. About these findings, the well-known scholar R. Freeman Butts observed, "These findings are . . . disturbing . . . for our citizenship itself is at stake."

*TABLE 3.—PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AT ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS BY GRADE*

NAEP Civics Assessment 1998*

| | Below Basic | Basic | Proficient | Advanced |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 4 | 31 | 46 | 21 | 2 |
| Grade 8 | 30 | 48 | 21 | 2 |
| Grade 12 | 35 | 39 | 22 | 4 |

*Totals by grade may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Although the percentage below Basic in civics is lower than in U.S. history at all three grades, and the percentage at proficient is higher, the results of the 1998 civics assessment are still troubling.

It is important to point out that 35 percent of 12th graders did not reach the NAEP Basic level and that the percentage below Basic is higher at the 12th grade than at the 4th or 8th grade. These young citizens, approaching or at voting age, do not demonstrate an understanding of the principles of American Government, its structure of checks and balances, and the roles of political parties and interest groups in our democracy. Students at or above the NAEP Proficient level in civics have a good understanding of how governments and constitutions work and the ability to apply what they've learned to concrete situations. However, it is worrisome that only 26 percent of 12th graders were at or above the Proficient level.

At the Basic level in civics at the 12th grade, student responses indicate:

- understanding that constitutional Government can take many forms;
- knowledge of the fundamental principles of American constitutional Government and politics;
- familiarity with both rights and responsibilities in a democratic society;
- recognition of the value of political participation.

This means that 35 percent of 12th graders in 1998, for example, (1) could not list two ways in which the American system of Government is designed to prevent absolutism and arbitrary power; (2) did not know that the President and the State Department have more authority over foreign policy than either Congress or the courts; and (3) did not know that the Supreme Court used the 14th Amendment to the Constitution to invalidate State laws that segregate public schools.

As with U.S. history, the results show, generally, that the percentage below Basic increases as students progress through the grades and that much larger percentages of minority students are below Basic than white students. At all three grades, differences in the percentage below Basic between white students and African American, Hispanic, and Native American students are more than two to one.

*TABLE 4.—PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS BELOW BASIC BY GRADE AND RACE*

NAEP Civics Assessment 1998

| | White | African American | Hispanic | Native American | Asian/Pacific Islander |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 4 | 21 | 52 | 57 | 46 | 29 |
| Grade 8 | 20 | 50 | 55 | 51 | 29 |
| Grade 12 | 27 | 58 | 56 | 56 | 34 |

Finding 3 of the American History Achievement Act states that "America's past encompasses great leaders and great ideas that contribute to our shared heritage and to the principles of freedom, equality, justice, and opportunity for all."

Mr. Chairman, the data cited above raise serious questions about how well these noble principles are being transmitted to and absorbed by rising generations of young adults. The disparate performance between minority and non-minority students in U.S. history and in civics is egregious and poses challenges to our Nation's progress in achieving those very principles. Aristotle said, "If liberty and equality. . .'are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the Government to the utmost." Are not the chances of all our citizens sharing equally in Government lessened if the knowledge about the core principles and history of that Government is unequal?

**The American History Achievement Act**

The American History Achievement Act consists of amendments to the current authorizing legislation for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It amends the authorizing legislation by:

(1) calling for assessments in history at least once every 4 years;

(2) authorizing trial State assessments in U.S. history and civics in grades 8 and 12, with priority given to conducting assessments in U.S. history;

(3) assigning the National Assessment Governing Board the responsibility for identifying and selecting participating States, in consultation with the Commissioner for Education Statistics;

(4) authorizing appropriations for these purposes for NAEP operations and the Governing Board.

**Schedule of U.S. History and Civics Assessments**

The current NAEP legislation makes the Governing Board responsible for determining the schedule of subjects and grades to be assessed by NAEP. The Governing Board maintains a schedule of assessments with a minimum 10-year outlook to

allow advance notice to NAEP participants and sufficient time to plan for NAEP operations.

I am pleased to report that the Governing Board, just a few weeks ago at its quarterly meeting of May 19–21, 2005, adopted a schedule of assessments that provides for the assessment of U.S. history and civics once every 4 years. The newly adopted assessment schedule revises and extends the current schedule through the year 2017.

U.S. history and civics assessments in grades 4, 8, and 12 at the national level were already scheduled for 2006. Under the new schedule, assessments in U.S. history and civics in grades 4, 8, and 12 at the national level will also be conducted in 2010 and 2014. In addition to monitoring progress within grades over time, the once every 4-year schedule provides the added advantage of aligning with the cohort progression from grades 4 to 8 and grades 8 to 12. These assessments will continue a trend line of assessments in U.S. history conducted in 1994 and 2001. In civics, these assessments will continue a trend line with a base year of 1998.

**Trial State Assessments in Grades 8 and 12**

The American History Achievement Act provides for the conduct of trial State assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12 in at least 10 States that are geographically diverse. Because a number of prerequisite steps are required to be carried out in the year before a State level assessment is conducted, funding must be provided both in the year before and the year of the assessment. These prerequisite steps include identification of participating States, drawing the sample of schools and students, working directly with the schools to provide an orientation to the assessment, and printing test booklets.

In contrast to the requirement under title I that States receiving funding must participate in NAEP reading and mathematics assessments in grades 4 and 8 every 2 years, State participation in NAEP U.S. history and civics assessments at grades 8 and 12 would be voluntary. Eliciting voluntary State participation at grade 12 would pose new challenges for NAEP that will be discussed in detail below.

The American History Achievement Act provides that only grades 8 and 12 will be assessed at the State level. This appears to recognize that significant variation exists from state-to-state in U.S. history and civics curricula by grade 4, making this grade less appropriate as an object of State level assessment. On the other hand, by grades 8 and 12, it is likely that students have been exposed to instruction in U.S. history and civics. These grades are also important for assessment purposes because they represent important transition points in schooling in the U.S. Grade 8 generally represents the transition point to high school, and grade 12 marks the end of K–12 schooling in the U.S. and the transition point to adult pursuits—college, training for employment, and entrance into the military.

While grades 8 and 12 are important points in American education, NAEP's experience at the State level at the respective grades is vastly different. From 1990 to 2002, State level participation in NAEP was strictly voluntary, was limited to grades 4 and 8, and involved only the subjects of reading, mathematics, science, and writing. Mandatory State level participation in grades 4 and 8 in reading and mathematics became a legislated requirement in 2003 under title I. State level participation in science and writing assessments at grades 4 and 8 remains voluntary. Voluntary State level participation at grades 4 and 8 from 1990 to the present across the four subjects offered has been solid, generally reaching between 40 and 44 States per assessment.

Therefore, there is reason to believe that, with adequate notice, appropriate outreach, and targeted follow up, achieving the voluntary participation of 10 States at grade 8 is a reasonable goal. However, in contrast to NAEP's 15-year experience eliciting participation for state-level assessments at grades 4 and 8, NAEP has never conducted state-level assessments at grade 12. We know that, at the national level, obtaining the cooperation of high schools to participate in 12th grade NAEP is more challenging than at grades 4 and 8, and that participation rates are much lower at grade 12 than at grades 4 and 8.

Mr. Chairman, the Governing Board's primary role is to oversee and set policy for NAEP, in accordance with legislative guidance. I want to assure you that, upon enactment of the American History Achievement Act and provision of appropriations that are sufficient and timely, the Governing Board will commit to doing its utmost to elicit the voluntary participation of 10 States in assessments of U.S. history and civics at grade 8 and at grade 12.

**Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, it is commendable that you and Senator Kennedy have introduced the American History Achievement Act and that you are conducting this hearing.

As the bill so eloquently states: ". . . the strength of American democracy and our standing in the world depend on ensuring that our children have a strong understanding of our Nation's past."

Regrettably, the NAEP results, especially at the 12th grade and by race/ethnicity, give cause for concern about the state of knowledge of American students about U.S. history and civics. We ignore at our own peril the implications of these results for our Nation's future.

Drawing from her remarks about the NAEP U.S. history and civics results, I would like to close with these quotes made by former Governing Board member Diane Ravitch: "Preparing our youth to be responsible members of a democratic society is one of the most important missions of American education." "Our ability to defend—thoughtfully and intelligently—what we as a Nation hold dear depends on our knowledge and understanding of what we hold dear." "We cannot be content when so many . . . are so poorly prepared."

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Norby?

Ms. NORBY. On behalf of the Smithsonian Institution, I would like to thank the members of the subcommittee for this opportunity to testify on the strengthening American history and civics instruction in our schools.

As Mr. McCullough mentioned, classroom teachers aren't the only ones responsible for ensuring that our children understand history and the duties of citizenship. All of us in the scholarly community share this responsibility. And the Smithsonian as our national museum has unique resources to commit to this effort, with nine research centers, 18 museums, thousands of scholars, and millions of artifacts.

Today what I would like to do is talk about three ways in which we are using these resources to support the teaching of American history and civics. First, for teachers, through professional development and curriculum resources and, for students, through specific programs that are offered nationwide.

First I will talk about professional development. The Smithsonian offers in-depth week-long seminars in Washington, DC. and workshops in communities across the country. I would like to describe a typical seminar focusing on teaching Colonial history.

In the morning, teachers work directly with historians. For example, they look over the shoulder of Doug Owlsley, who is a forensic anthropologist, as he examines recently unearthed skeletons from Jamestown. Or they work with Doug Mudd, who is a numismaticist, who compares Colonial currency; or Harry Rubenstein, a curator, to analyze the purpose and symbolism of George Washington's uniform. These experiences bring the past to life. They deepen our understanding about what historians do and they generate excitement. As Mr. McCullough pointed out, they reinvigorate the pleasure of history. Then, based on these experiences, teachers also work with Smithsonian staff to find ways to replicate these experiences in their own classrooms using resources from their own communities, using reproductions or even digital images. In this way, they can share the thrill of discovery with their own students.

Usually, we develop these programs in partnership with a school district or an organization like Advanced Placement College Board. Recently, our work in school districts in Arizona, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, and North Carolina has been funded by the Teaching American History grants administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

Our curriculum resources are also based on Smithsonian scholarship and our experiences working with teachers. Our central education Web site, Smithsonianeducation.org, is a gateway to nearly 1,000 resources that includes lesson plans, Web sites, and now even video streaming.

This fall we will launch a new Web site, Smithsonian Source, that will be devoted exclusively to history and civics instruction. What makes this site unique is that it is designed by teachers for teachers in consultation with Smithsonian scholars. In a sense, it is the Smithsonian collection, as curated by educators, representing the body of work from our collaborations through the Department of Education grants. So it replicates virtually the week-long experiences in Washington, DC., with video streaming of curators modeling how to look at evidence, like a portrait or a photograph; digital images, so students can practice these skills to investigate a specific topic, like civil rights; and background information vetted by Smithsonian historians that teachers can trust.

We also disseminate this information through a biannual publication called Smithsonian In Your Classroom, which is sent free to 83,000 elementary and middle schools in the United States. So for the issue on Colonial money, for example, it includes a background essay, full-color, accurate reproductions of a sampling of Colonial money, and teaching ideas on how to use it in the classroom.

Our annual Smithsonian Teachers Night in Washington, DC. and cities around the country is an opportunity to widely disseminate these resources, with 4,000 teachers attending this event last year.

I would like to turn now to students. I have talked about professional development and curriculum resources that we provide to teachers, but will the difference it will make interest the lives of students?

Distance learning is extending our reach right into the classroom, taking Smithsonian scholarship and collections directly to those students. This year, virtual field trips enabled thousands of school children to witness the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. Other students participate in point-to-point video conferences with Smithsonian staff. Imagine a high school student who is reading "1776" and then participates in a video conference to examine George Washington's uniform as a symbol of his leadership. Other students viewed a virtual field trip of our Witness to History exhibition and then participated in online chats about how our world has changed since 9/11.

Even our science museums are committed to these efforts. For example, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Center in Panama uses the Internet to work with students and teachers in the United States to help them understand the connection between biodiversity research and international environmental policies.

These experiences can have a profound effect on students, motivating them to want to learn about American history and inspiring them to be better citizens themselves.

Finally, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about partnerships with national leadership organizations. We are currently working with the Council for Chief State School Officers and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to forge formal partnerships that will make these resources more widely available.

In this brief overview, I hope I have conveyed the ways in which the Smithsonian is reaching out into schools across the country, and I commend the committee for its efforts to improve American history and civics. I welcome the chance to assist you in any way that I can.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Ms. Norby.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Norby follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE L. NORBY

On behalf of the Smithsonian Institution, I would like to thank the members of the subcommittee for this opportunity to testify on how to strengthen American history and civics in our schools.

Classroom teachers are not the only ones responsible for ensuring that our children understand our history and the duties of citizenship. All of us in the scholarly community have an obligation to assist in this effort. The Smithsonian—with its 9 research centers, 18 museums, hundreds of scholars, and millions of artifacts—has a special obligation. My purpose today is to describe the unique opportunities the Smithsonian offers teachers of American history and civics, and to share with you some of the things we have learned from those teachers.

As director of the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies, I have the privilege of overseeing the Smithsonian's museum-based education programs and our educational outreach initiatives. Today I would like to tell you about three aspects of our work: professional-development programs for teachers, curriculum development, and programs that reach students directly in classrooms nationwide.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Smithsonian offers in-depth weeklong history seminars in Washington, D.C., and workshops in communities across the country. Usually, we develop these programs in partnership with a school district, or with an organization like Advanced Placement College Board. Recently, our work with school districts in Arizona, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, and North Carolina has been supported by Teaching American History Grants administered by the U.S. Department of Education. From such collaborations, we know that teachers, particularly at the elementary school level, need to build their subject knowledge. The average elementary-school teacher takes only one college course in American history.

In a Smithsonian program, a teacher can peer over a historian's shoulder as, together, they do the detective work of primary-source scholarship. Imagine a teacher from San Francisco working side-by-side with a Smithsonian forensic anthropologist to gather clues about life in colonial Jamestown from newly unearthed skeletons. Or imagine this teacher working with a curator to examine wet-plate photographs of San Francisco in the Gold Rush days of the 1850s. Then imagine these teachers learning how to recreate this excitement in their own classrooms, using local objects or documents.

It is particularly rewarding when the Smithsonian is able to deepen a teacher's understanding of the history of his or her own community. The Smithsonian, as a national institution, is not only devoted to history on a national level, but also to the history of a Nation composed of communities—the history of all of us. All of these experiences generate excitement and a renewed commitment to the teaching of American history. Just last week, a teacher reported that a Smithsonian workshop inspired her to enroll in a college course in U.S. history. We regard this as a success story, but we know it is not the end of the journey. Her renewed enthusiasm will be passed on, in incalculable ways, to her students. We all know that it takes an inspired teacher to inspire students.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Our curriculum materials, too, are based on Smithsonian scholarship, and they are available to every teacher in the country, regardless of whether or not the teacher is able to visit the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Our central education Web site, *SmithsonianEducation.org*, is a gateway to nearly 1,000 lesson plans, activity ideas, and teaching resources. This fall, we will unveil a new Web site, *SmithsonianSource.org*, devoted exclusively to American history and civics. It will contain resources for building subject knowledge and improving teaching skills. With content selected and evaluated by teachers, and aligned with history standards in select States, *SmithsonianSource.org* will include images of primary sources, doc-

ument-based questions, lesson plans, and video clips that bring Smithsonian historians into the classroom.

Let me give you an example of the kinds of curriculum resources we create here at the Smithsonian. As you might know, the National Museum of American History recently opened a major new permanent exhibition, *The Price of Freedom: Americans at War*, which shows how wars have shaped our Nation's history and transformed American society. At the museum's Web site, teachers can download lesson plans and can order a free DVD related to the exhibition. But the Smithsonian is such a vast and various institution that the teacher need not stop there. He may visit several other Smithsonian museum Web sites to find additional resources—writing activities based on the personal experiences of soldiers and their families, primary sources that document the contributions of African American aviators, and enormous collections of artworks and music clips that bring alive the cultural climate of the time.

We disseminate this work through our bi-annual publication, *Smithsonian in Your Classroom*, to all elementary and middle schools in the United States. Each issue includes a background essay, lesson plan, images from our collection and recommended resources. Lessons guide students as they examine, for example, currency from the colonial era, children's letters from Japanese American internment camps, and Native American dolls from different regions. We also make these resources available to more than 4,000 teachers who attend our annual Teachers' Night in Washington, D.C., and select cities around the country.

## OUTREACH TO CLASSROOMS AND STUDENTS

Distance-learning technology is opening our doors to an even larger audience nationwide, taking our scholarship and collections directly to students through virtual field trips, broadcasts, and point-to-point conferencing. Students can see for themselves our Nation's treasures and go behind-the-scenes to watch Smithsonian historians at work. This year, virtual field trips enabled thousands of schoolchildren to participate in the historic opening of the National Museum of the American Indian; thousands more viewed the Wright Brothers' Flyer at the National Air and Space Museum and learned about the history of flight through interactive online experiments. Through real-time "video visits," students have a chance to view artworks depicting the American Revolution and to discuss the works with curators from the Smithsonian American Art Museum. These technologies also enable students to see the plants and animals that Lewis and Clark found on their expedition and read the journal entries describing these discoveries. Access to these primary sources can have a profound impact on the imagination and curiosity of students.

The Smithsonian can also serve as a virtual gathering place for students to talk about the issues that will become tomorrow's history lessons. Through our annual Talkback Classroom video-conference program, students in Washington, D.C., hold discussions with students in Canberra, Australia. Topics have included the meaning of citizenship and the challenge of forging a national identity among citizens of varying backgrounds and cultures. To supplement these student-to-student exchanges, U.S. students attend workshops with Smithsonian curators and historians, study Smithsonian resources, and take part in online conversations. The program culminates in the live videoconference in which students interview a prominent elected official.

It may come as a surprise that even our science-focused museums and research centers are helping to improve students' civic skills, by showing them the ways in which scientific research and inquiry inform policy. For example, our Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama works with students and teachers to help them understand the connection between biodiversity research and international environmental policies. The National Zoo's Conservation and Research Center teaches students scientific methods for monitoring the health and diversity of plants and animals in their own communities. These experiences are preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship.

## CONCLUSION

The Smithsonian works with education-leadership organizations to better understand and serve the needs of students and teachers. We are currently seeking formal partnerships with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Officials in these organizations have confirmed that there is a great need for the kinds of professional-development training and distance-learning programs the Smithsonian can offer.

Throughout its history, the Smithsonian has been devoted to the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." It is a weighty mandate. I hope that I have conveyed, in

this brief overview, the ways we are fulfilling the mandate by reaching out to schools across the country. I commend the committee for its efforts to improve American history and civics education, and thus to equip students with the knowledge and skill to shape their own future. I welcome the chance to assist you in any way I can. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Parisi?

Mr. PARISI. Thank you, Chairman Alexander. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about how the American History Achievement Act can help to strengthen the teaching of American history and civics. And thank you, Senator Reed, for your attendance and your kind words of introduction.

As a staff member with the Rhode Island affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, one of my assignments has been to serve on a State delegation to both congressional conferences on civics education. As a result of these conferences, Rhode Island has begun the hard but important work of ensuring that all its students are educated in State history and the principles of democratic Government. Unfortunately, my State has a long way to go. As you know, the most recent NAEP assessment suggests that American students are less proficient in American history than in any other core subject.

Given the essential civic mission of our schools, one must ask how can this be. Some of the reasons on how this can be are contained in the 2003 study of the Al Shanker Institute, a nonprofit institute dedicated to promoting inquiry and discussion of education policy issues, and named in honor of the late president of the AFT. The report, Educating Democracy, states standards to ensure a civic core, evaluates all history, State and civics, and social studies standards at the secondary grades to determine their worth for educating democratic citizens. That is, viewed as a whole, do these standards embody a common core of learning that equip citizens to make informed decisions and are the required topics clear, concise and, most importantly, teachable in the fewer than 180 days a year that is typically available for classroom instruction?

The results are mixed. The report found that only 24 States met or partially met the criteria for specifying a civic core within their standards, but none of the 48 States in the study had written a document that had both a clear focus on democracy education and was teachable in the limited time schools have available. I say 48 States because two States—Iowa and my own State of Rhode Island—do not even have standards in these essential subject areas. As the report suggests, the work of setting standards, deciding what is important, what is less important or not important for students to learn is crucial.

We are doing what we can to rectify the lack of standards in Rhode Island. Fortunately, as of last night, bipartisan legislation has passed through the General Assembly to require our State Board of Regents to adopt standards in civics and Rhode Island history by August 31, 2007. And I must say that this important work was accomplished in large part because of the attendance of a team of Rhode Islanders to the two congressional conferences on civics education. We met, we had a rich discussion on the importance of civics and history, and we went back to our State with a plan on how to strengthen civics education in the State. We had a successful civics summit this past May 4th—Rhode Island Inde-

pendence Day—and we were happy to be able to work on legislation to ensure that we join the other 48 States in having standards in this important area.

Mr. Chairman, by introducing S. 860, both you and Senator Kennedy have sent a clear message that good standards are vital because they are a foundation for teaching and learning in every school. But having them and using them are two different things. Among the other findings in the Gagnon Report noted that only 12 States actually state that schools are required to teach and students are required to study the content defined by State standards. In 18 States, the existence of statewide tests for history or social studies at least implies that most students are required to learn this content. So good standards matter, but good assessments matter, too.

I believe that S. 860 could be of great benefit to the creation of high-quality civics and history tests. The more frequent administration of the NAEP assessment in U.S. history would provide a more accurate picture of student achievement and help to draw public attention to the progress or lack of progress in this area. It might help as well in bringing some focus and clarity to the question of what constitutes an essential civic core for learning.

The funding of State-level pilot assessments is also vital. State departments of education have a limited capacity to develop and implement any more assessment programs. Although State and Federal accountability requirements have placed increasing demands on State education agencies, these agencies around the country are losing staff as a result of State budget constraints. In the May 11th edition of Education Week, there was a front page article on this phenomenon. For example, over the past 2½ years, California's education agency lost 200 employees; Michigan had a three-quarter reduction in staff over the past decade; Indiana staff has been reduced from 400 to 260; and in my own State of Rhode Island, the professional staff at the State Department of Education has dropped from 95 to 50 in recent years. And that approximately 50 percent drop is common throughout the country.

So clearly, if States are to develop high-quality assessments, Federal assistance will be needed. By funding these pilot programs, quality models could be developed for all other States to emulate. And the existence of such testing programs also would help mitigate the tendency of No Child Left Behind and other accountability measures to narrow the curriculum toward reading and math and away from the humanities, arts, and social sciences.

In education, getting the basics right is important. But neither can we forget that since our Nation's birth, the prime reason for free public education in a common school has been to nurture politically perceptive, committed citizens.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to speak about this important issue from the perspective of teachers. I welcome any questions from you or other members of the committee that you may have about my statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Parisi follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES PARISI

Good afternoon Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Dodd and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on how the American History Achievement Act (S. 860) can help to strengthen the teaching of American history and civics.

My name is Jim Parisi. As a staff member of the Rhode Island affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), one of my assignments has been to serve on the State delegation to both congressional conferences on Civics Education. As a result of these conferences, Rhode Island has begun working to ensure that all of its students are educated in State history and the principles of democratic Government.

Unfortunately, my State has a long way to go in this regard. As you know, the most recent NAEP assessments suggest that American students are less proficient in American history than in any other core subject. Given the essential civic mission of our schools, how can this be?

One reason is suggested by a 2003 study from the Albert Shanker Institute, a nonprofit institute dedicated to promoting inquiry and discussion of educational policy issues and named in honor of the late president of the AFT. This report, *Educating Democracy: State Standards To Ensure a Civic Core,* [1] evaluates all State history, civics, and social studies standards for the secondary grades to determine their worth for educating democratic citizens. That is, viewed as a whole, do the standards embody a common core of learning that equips citizens to make informed decisions—and are the required topics clear, concise, and teachable in the fewer than 180 days a year that are typically available for classroom instruction?

The results were mixed. The report found that only 24 States met or partially met the criteria for specifying a "civic core" within their standards. But not one of the 48 States in the study had written a document that had both a clear focus on democracy education and was teachable in the limited time schools have available. I say 48 States because two States, Iowa and my own State of Rhode Island, do not even have standards in these essential subject areas.

As the report suggests, the work of setting standards—deciding what is most important and what is less important or not important for students to learn—is crucial. So what should be in a civic core curriculum? The late Paul Gagnon, the noted historian and education scholar who authored the study, put forward some concrete suggestions.

According to Gagnon, "Political education requires mastery of the fundamentals of civics—the principles and workings of Federal, State, and local Government, of the law and court systems, the rights and duties of citizens, and how the United States Constitution and its resulting institutions and practices are like and unlike those of other societies. But to sustain the principles, institutions, and practices of democracy, citizens need to understand why and how they came into being, the conditions that allowed them to be established, as well as the ideas and forces that have been supportive or destructive of them over time." In other words, they need to have a working knowledge of U.S. history and a basic knowledge of world history.

We are doing what we can to rectify the lack of standards in Rhode Island. Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in our State Legislature that would require our State Board of Regents to adopt standards in civics and Rhode Island history. The Senate version of this bill was amended to give the regents until August 31, 2007, to accomplish this important task. This bill has widespread support in the State, and we are hoping to see it passed this year.

Mr. Chairman, by introducing S. 860, both you and Senator Kennedy sent a clear message that good standards are vital because they are the foundation for teaching and learning in every school. But having them and using them are different things. Among its other findings, the Gagnon report noted that only 12 States actually say that schools are required to teach, and students are required to study, the content defined by State standards. In 18 States, the existence of statewide tests for history or social studies at least implies that most students are required to learn this content. So, good standards matter. But good assessment matters, too.

I believe that S. 860 could be of great benefit in the creation of high quality civics and history tests. The more frequent administration of the NAEP assessment in U.S. history would provide a more accurate picture of student achievement and help to draw public attention to the progress—or lack of progress—in this area. It might help, as well, in bringing some focus and clarity to the question of what constitutes

[1] For downloadable excerpts, go to http://www.ashankerinst.org/Downloads/gagnon/contents.html.

an essential civic core of learning. The funding of State-level pilot assessments is also vital.

State departments of education have a limited capacity to develop and implement any more assessment programs. Although State and Federal accountability requirements have placed increasing demands on State education agencies, these agencies around the country are losing staff as a result of State budget constraints. The May 11, 2005 edition of *Education Week* had a front-page article on this phenomenon. For example, over the past 2½ years, California has lost 200 employees. Michigan has had a three-quarter reduction in staff over the past decade. Indiana's staff has been reduced from 400 to 260. In my own State of Rhode Island, the professional staff of the State education department has dropped from 95 to 50 in recent years.

Clearly, if States are to develop high-quality assessments, Federal assistance will be needed. By funding these pilot programs, quality models could be developed for all other States to emulate. And the existence of such testing programs also would help mitigate the tendency of No Child Left Behind and other accountability measures to narrow the curriculum toward reading and math and away from the humanities, arts and social sciences. In education, getting the basics right is important. But neither can we forget that, since our Nation's birth, the prime reason for free public education in a common school has been to nurture politically perceptive, committed citizens.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the chance to talk about this important issue from the perspective of teachers. I welcome any questions that members of the committee may have about my statement.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thanks to each of you. I will take about 5 minutes for questions and then go to Senator Reed. And we will go back and forth for a few minutes.

Mr. Parisi, thank you very much for your testimony. Albert Shanker was a real leader in standards and the American Federation of Teachers has been as well. And the Shanker Institute's focus on the civic mission in the public schools has been one of the leading educational efforts in the country to remind us of the importance of—helping us remember that an important part of public education is teaching children what it means to be an American. So it is especially appropriate that you be here.

And Ms. Norby, it is almost impossible to imagine what the Smithsonian could do to help in so many different ways, so I look forward to talking with you.

Let me direct my first questions, though, to Mr. Smith so I can understand what we are talking about. Now, as I understand it, you said that the national assessment in U.S. history and in civics—that is two different assessments, right?

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. One in history, one in civics. And that the next national assessment is scheduled for 2006? Is that right?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. In the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. And then it will be again in 2010 and 2014.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir. The 2006 had already been scheduled, but the change in schedule added 2010 and 2014.

Senator ALEXANDER. So we can look forward, based upon your recent action, to a national assessment in 2006, 2010, 2014, in all three grades, of U.S. history and in civics?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, that is terrific. And then, what we are talking about today is seeing whether we can allow 10 States to compare their results, which is one way to put the spotlight on the question. And as I understood your comments, you said that with

appropriate notice and with funding for 2 consecutive years, the year before and the year of administration that you could most easily do that in the 4th grade and 8th grade, and with more difficulty do it in the 12th. Is that right?

Mr. SMITH. Actually, the 8th grade, with your bill calling for the 8th and the 12th, the 8th grade is something we have had experience and we have found that when your blue ribbon committee in the late 1980s did what it did and Congress followed the lead and enacted the legislation, we found that even in those years before No Child Left Behind, when it was a voluntary participation by the State, we typically were getting 40 to 45 States a year to do that.

Senator ALEXANDER. In the 8th grade?

Mr. SMITH. In the 8th grade, yes. In the 12th grade, we have actually never tried the assessment. Now, as you know, we do have a national commission that has handed us a set of recommendations that would indeed suggest and move us toward 12th grade assessment at the State level in the math and reading. And that is still under review. We have been getting mixed reactions, as you might imagine, from that.

But the other factor that we have to look at—and as I indicated, if Congress says we will do it, we are going to get out and roll up our sleeves and we are going to do it—but we have found that there has been a declining participation rate at the 12th grade level in the 12th grade assessments that we are now conducting at the national level. And whether that is a trend that we can reverse is yet to be found. That is one reason why we created the national commission, to look at ways to increase participation. The last time, I believe it was in 2002, when we had a 12th grade assessment, we only had 55 percent participation. Well, that gets us to a level that puts us on a precarious edge as to whether or not we have a large enough sample to be valid and reliable and to produce results that are valid and reliable.

So these are unknowns. They may not be hurdles. It may be that there will be enough interest that we can do it. But it is something that we have never tried before, and that is the main point I wanted to make. It is going to be unknown turf for us.

Senator ALEXANDER. But if we are going to do the State-by-State comparisons, 8th grade, you say fine, with appropriate notice and funding?

Mr. SMITH. I really would not anticipate much of a problem getting the volunteer States to do that.

Senator ALEXANDER. And did I misunderstand or you didn't say anything about 4th grade for the State-by-State assessments, did you?

Mr. SMITH. No, sir, only because, with the bill calling for grades 8th and 12th, that is where we focused.

Senator ALEXANDER. Right.

Mr. SMITH. If you were to say 4th, I would say——

Senator ALEXANDER. No, I am just really seeking your advice. I guess I heard Mr. McCullough suggest, which was interesting, that he would focus on the middle school grades, it sounded like—5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th, those grades, which would argue in favor of the 8th grade test. On the other hand, if as a result of all the discussion that is going on about high schools right now, if we end up

with a new focus on reading and math and science in the high schools and we leave out U.S. history, we may have unintentionally de-emphasized it at a time when we are trying to emphasize it.

So I guess what we need to do is to hear you say that 8th grade no problem, and that is probably comparing your comments with Mr. McCullough's if that makes sense. Twelfth grade, we will look forward to your further advice.

I wonder, Mr. Parisi or Ms. Norby, do you have any comment about 8th or 12th grade before I go to Senator Reed, your advice about where it would make the most sense for us to focus our attention?

Mr. PARISI. I think one of the problems our report found was that there weren't always State standards that had the scope and sequence down pack. They were clear that, you know, in this grade you are going to take world history and this grade you are going to take American history. I know we have recommended 2 years of American history, and I have to tell you, Senator, that——

Senator ALEXANDER. In which years?

Mr. PARISI [CONTINUING]. In the secondary year. So if you had a 12th grade assessment, I would imagine that school districts would really have to closely examine what they require their high school students to take. Are they requiring their students to take enough U.S. history, for example, to score well on these assessments?

Senator ALEXANDER. So it would be one way to encourage States to focus on your recommendation.

You know, one of the great ironies is that Iowa may have the best schools in the country, yet it doesn't have State standards in anything. But that is a separate discussion.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Norby, do you have anything to add?

Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for your testimony, particularly thoughtful and impressive.

One of the areas that was alluded to, at least, was the pressure put on States by the requirements under No Child Left Behind for the grading, if you will, and testing in other areas such as English and mathematical reasoning. I wondered, from your perspective, Jim, can you give any insights from Rhode Island? Then I will ask Dr. Smith and Ms. Norby also.

Mr. PARISI. Well, I know, you know, our State, like the rest of the country, developed report cards—you know, this is how this school has done on these State assessments. And people look at the page of the newspaper and, you know, think about their property value and think about how the schools are doing and make judgments about the performance of their local school based on those tests. But if those tests only cover a couple of subject areas, just English and just math, and they don't cover science and, sadly, they don't cover something like U.S. history, I don't think the general public is getting a full picture of how schools are doing.

So if we expanded the tests to other important areas, I think it would really provide a better piece of public information so people can make informed judgments on what their schools are doing and what they need to be doing better.

Senator REED. Dr. Smith, any comments?

Mr. SMITH. I think most of what I have said already would be the essence of it, although I might add that there are two other trains moving down the track now, I think, that could have an impact, Senator, on your question also. One is the emphasis that is now being given by the National Governors Association by a lot of States on the high school focus. And to what degree that would inspire some change, some greater participation, some greater interest in knowing, that is an unknown, too, but at least it is an encouraging movement, I think, in that direction, that we should know something before long.

The other thing that I failed to mention a while ago that I think is another piece of the answer, Senator, to your question, is that our board has been looking at the high school assessment for nearly 2 years now. And in that process, one of the items on the agenda has been whether or not there should be a State NAEP in these other subjects, like math and reading and science. And the recommendation of the blue ribbon commission was yes, there should be. So we are still in the process of evaluating that.

Another important piece that I think has represented a change element that has relevance to what we are talking about here today, the commission recommended that we change our assessment at the 12th grade from one that is almost totally reflective—looking back—to one that would be predictive as to whether or not students are leaving prepared to go to college, to go to the workplace, or go to the military.

In all of the many discussions, we have had many commission papers, we had a lot of presentations, a lot of discussion, it has been the central item on our agenda, and one of the things that has begun to crop up in the last 6 months or so is the feeling that maybe reading and math and even science are not the only ones that should be factored in to the preparedness question. History and civics have also, because after all, these assessment results would show that we have a whole lot of students leaving the high schools not prepared to be citizens. And that is an important point that now our board is even looking at whether or not extending that to whether you change the assessment in history to one that would be more predictive than reflective.

Now, that is a tough challenge. It would be a little tougher to do that, I think, than it would be in math or perhaps in reading. But it is something on our table that is very much alive in the discussion.

Senator REED. Can you elaborate on the difference between looking backward and looking forward? Is that what you do with math and English now, you look forward and look backward?

Mr. SMITH. Well, presently, the present 12th grade assessment is one that really assesses what students have learned in high school and can do. What it doesn't do is project ahead to how well prepared they are to make it in college and the military and the workplace. And we have already addressed it with reading, and our board has gone on record in support of converting the framework, the new framework for reading, to one that would in fact look at preparedness. And it didn't take a whole lot of change. One of our great fears was that you might have to have 17 or 18 or 20 different levels of achievement to take into account what kind of

workplace they were going into, what kind of college or university they were going into.

But the basic conclusion—it is not just our conclusion; we have looked to Achieve, the organization Achieve, for some guidance on this and they came to the same conclusion—that in today's world what you need to make it in the workplace and college is not all that different. There are certain basics that you have to have. And what we are looking at is preparation for going into these areas, not assuming we are going to train every person to be this type of technician in one area and a business leader in another area and a Ivy League college in another area, but there are certain basics that would prepare you to go into these types of endeavors trained and prepared to do the work on the front end. Without remediation, I might say.

Senator REED. Thank you, Doctor.

Just a final point, if I may, and I will address it to Ms. Norby and invite all the other participants. History and civics. You have two separate assessments, is that correct?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator REED. OK. You know, again, I think maybe on the street the notion is, you know, history is important but much more important is civics—how does the Government work, how old do you have to be to vote, what are your responsibilities, etc. And harkening back to our youth, I think we used to, from our parents, get the notion that, well, these are the basic lessons, these civic lessons you have to know. In fact, that was often taught in Americanization classes. But if there is the pressure of time and curriculum, space, is civics something that has to be the essential for someone coming out of school?

Ms. NORBY. Senator Reed, if I can respond to that. What we have found in working with the teachers through the workshops is that they are under enormous pressure. And when given that pressure, they tend to focus on the areas of greatest accountability, where there is testing. At the same time, we find that teachers are trying to find ways to engage with the history and civics education through reading assignments, through analyzing primary sources. And to come back to the earlier discussion, we think that is a critical role that the civics and history education play in developing these critical thinking skills, of how do you compare different sources, how do you analyze them for detail, how do you weigh evidence. These are skills that will apply in whatever work they eventually go into.

If I could also just mention on how we use tests in order to guide the development of our programs. We work very closely with Advanced Placement College Board looking at how actually children perform when they take those tests in school districts across the country and where the areas that they have greatest difficulty are. And in fact it is on the document-based questions, where students have to look at different documents, compare different sources, and arrive at an opinion and argument. And so when we develop our materials and our courses, that is what we focus on, is we have them working with historians modeling and then assisting the students and coaching the students in those kinds of schools. So the

tests also help us in determining what kinds of programs and where we should put our focus.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Just a final point, because the chairman has been most gracious. But Jim, do you have a quick comment?

Mr. PARISI. Yes, I just wanted to note that the legislation that we got through the assembly last night did ask for civics standards K-12, so we definitely have a focus on civics. One of the five standards in this report on evaluating State standards talked about context and connection, that it can't just be U.S. history, but it has to be U.S. history in the context of civics and geography and economics, so that it is not just an issue of repeating facts, but understanding all the political ramifications of historical events.

Senator REED. Thank you. Thank you all very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Reed.

I appreciate Senator Reed's last point. If I could disagree just a little bit with him. My own view is that one of the reasons why I believe U.S. history scores are the lowest of any of the scores is because we have gotten them all mixed up with civics lessons and social studies and we don't teach history anymore. We are teaching kids how to balance a checkbook and go vote, but we don't teach them about the Constitution, they don't read the Declaration of Independence, they don't read Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and they haven't read the Second Inaugural Address, and they don't read the basic founding documents.

And that is a real conflict for many teachers, because the—I mean, I think civics is important, but my own view is that we sometimes, when pressuring teachers and educators to mix up U.S. history and civics, they water down the history and don't have time for it and don't teach it very well.

And so what I would much—I mean, just as one Senator's view, I like the fact that you have a distinct and discreet subject, U.S. history, and from that we would hope they would learn many of the things they need to know to be good citizens. And then in addition to that, there are lots of civic duties and responsibilities that need to be learned. So we could—I guess those are different points of view. Maybe they are, maybe they are not.

Senator REED. I don't think we are too far. I think we see the connection between the two. You can't really understand fully civics without a historical context, and American history leads you to lessons about how the country operates today as well as in the past.

But I think this is a dilemma because of the pressure of schedules, time, and resources that teachers face every day. And perhaps just this discussion might be helpful to try to provide some focus.

Senator ALEXANDER. I think that is a good point. For example, you and Mr. Parisi were talking about the history of Rhode Island. And Senator Reed is very interested in this. He brings it up a lot. We have a lot of debates here in the U.S. Senate about religious tests or faith—you know, the role of Government and the role of religion. And if there is a single State in the country which has a lot to teach us about that, it would be Rhode Island. And so I would argue that learning just the flat-out history of Rhode Island

and the early years and why it had a different point of view than Massachusetts Bay Colony and why it was different than Pennsylvania is worth doing before you ever get to civics. You might learn some civics as a result of that, but we might make better decisions about what we do here if we knew more about the history of Rhode Island.

Mr. PARISI. I would have to say, Senator, our one National Park, all 4½ acres of it, is dedicated to Roger Williams.

But to the point you just raised, I think a close examination of a State standards document would reveal that there is room for both. There is room for U.S. history standards and there is absolutely room for some kind of civics education, not only because it is an important core mission of schools, but there is ample evidence that when students take civics classes, they value voting more, they value keeping in contact with political officials more, they understand how the process works. So I think there is some real public benefit from ensuring that civics finds a place in whatever standards document States adopt.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Reed, do you have any other comment you would like to make?

Senator REED. No, I don't, except that was a very good idea for an amendment on your bill, to teach Rhode Island history to everybody, particularly here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. And on Mr. Parisi's point, Senator, the number one school in the United States last year in terms of the highest percentage of students placing with a 4 and 5 on the Advanced Placement Test for U.S. history was the House Page School, were the students in the House of Representatives who work all day, live in the Government, hopefully get inspired by it, but at least in the middle of it they learn history and, hopefully, some civics.

I have a few more questions and then we will bring the hearing to a conclusion.

Dr. Smith, you may know this or you may not. I should know it, but I don't. In Tennessee, do you remember or do you know what has happened over the last 25 or 30 years in terms of the teaching of U.S. history and civics? Is there more of it? Is there less of it? Is it about the same? Is it being taught differently? You have seen it from many vantage points. What would your estimate be?

Mr. SMITH. I think, Senator—and I have some gaps because I have been in and out in different roles—but I would say that there has been a kind of an ebb and flow in the way that it has developed. I think that in the period of the 1980s, when you, and Governor McWherter in the 1990s, were building what I felt was a very firm foundation, you with the Better Schools program, he with the Basic Education program. That really brought Tennessee, I think—and in some cases ahead of many other States—a foundation building process and it was a whole lot happening all at one time. And I think that during that period, people were scrambling at the school and district level to try to come up with all the various issues related to standards, to curriculum, to assessment. And in that process, I think some did it well and some did it not too well. There were a lot of stops and starts.

I think, bottom-line, though, to your question is that the end result of that is—and I have talked with people in Tennessee in the past several days about where they are, and I think one very important movement is that the State Board of Education within the last couple of years has developed an exit exam in American history that didn't exist before. And that is building off of some of the things that were done in that earlier period that I talked about, when you were governor and Governor McWherter was governor.

But I don't think—and I might say, too, that I am answering this as a former commissioner of education, not as the head of the National Assessment Governing Board, because we are not really supposed to be commenting about different States. But I hope that is understood by all for the record, I had to say that.

But as I look back on it, I really wish I had had this experience that I am in now first and then became commissioner of education, because there are some things that are happening here, I think, at the State level that are not generally known—and I don't mind admitting. For example, I had no idea as State commissioner of education, even though I supported NAEP and we were one of the early States to get into the NAEP assessment process, I had no idea of the type of process at this level that you go into in developing the assessment frameworks. It is a 2 year process. It involves literally hundreds of people, experts, from all across the Nation, people who are from practically every State involved in that process.

And I think if you ask anyone who knows anything at all about NAEP, the great majority of them would say, well, that is an inside-the-Beltway product. And nothing could be further from the truth. It is really a document that represents the best thinking of citizens at the grassroots level who are in some cases teachers, in some cases curriculum experts, in some cases members of the public, parents, and others. And one thing I have noticed even in the short 2½ years I have been here, there has been an upsurge in States coming to us and saying we want to know more about your framework. I actually heard a commissioner of education say in my presence and in the presence of other State commissioners, We're going to make our State assessment more "NAEP-like."

I see that as a positive, because there is no way that a single State, except maybe some of the really large States, would have the human and fiscal resources to develop the type of framework that we are able to develop at the Federal level. And to the extent that becomes an item that is of value to the States, I think that is very, very positive. If we had had that or known we could get that in the early 1990s, late 1980s, when I was commissioner, I think we would have saved a lot of spinning of our wheels.

Senator ALEXANDER. I wonder, do you have any annual conference of State education commissioners to explain what you do?

Mr. SMITH. Well, one of the things that is coming out of this overall review that I referenced earlier is a recommendation that we work with State chiefs and with assessment directors and become, hopefully—get a place on those programs, to where we can go and do just what you suggest.

Senator ALEXANDER. One suggestion might be the National Governors Association meets here every February and they meet with

the President and with one another, and you might invite the education commissioner of each State to come at that time and spend a day on a variety of things. Because I agree with you, it is a new governor or a new education commissioner, even if they have a fair amount of background, would save a year or 2 or 3 if they could find out early in the term what is available.

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. And that sort of focus, I bet you could get pretty good attendance at such a thing in February.

Mr. SMITH. We will pursue that idea. That is excellent.

Senator ALEXANDER. May I shift to Ms. Norby. The Smithsonian has such resources and does such a good job on so many things, I wanted to refer to something Mr. McCullough said. He said Mount Vernon is spending $84 million to build a visitors center, first to teach the visitors who George Washington was before they go into his house. And that is something to make us stop to think. You know, often we start talking about a subject assuming everybody knows what we are talking about, and we haven't stopped first to introduce ourselves or to introduce the subject.

And I suppose there was a time in our history not so long ago when no one had to introduce George Washington or Thomas Jefferson or John Adams or many other people. But today that may not be true.

There was an article in the Washington Post last week that you may know about, which I would say chided the Smithsonian's Museum of American History a little bit by suggesting that "it doesn't tell the whole American story or even chunks of the American story in chronological order, from Washington to Adams to Jefferson, from Roosevelt to Truman to Eisenhower. When this museum was built in 1964, this sort of thing probably wasn't necessary. But judging from a group of teenagers whom I recently hear lapse into silence when asked if they could identify Lewis and Clark, I suspect it is now necessary indeed."

One of the criticisms of the teaching of U.S. history is partly that it has gotten all jumbled up with social studies and so we just don't teach the raw documents anymore. Another of the criticisms is that we don't teach it as a great narrative story and that, because our history is such a work in progress that just taking snapshots of everything about this group of people or everything about that group of people misses the drama, misses the saga, misses the misunderstanding.

I mean, if we just took snapshots, Jefferson would be a slaveowner, women wouldn't be voting, and we wouldn't understand that our whole history has been one of reaching toward goals, failing to meet them, falling back, trying again, making progress. I mean, that is what most of our politics is about here in the U.S. Senate, about great goals that we have aspired to but we don't make them, so we recommit ourselves to try again.

I wonder if the Smithsonian—is it a valid criticism of the Smithsonian that when there are visitors there, that you don't spend enough time first introducing the United States to the visitor and saying this is George Washington, this is 1776, this is a chronology of this period of time? Obviously there is an appetite for that, be-

cause books on Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, 1776 are best-sellers in our country.

What would you say to this sort of criticism, or constructive criticism, let's say.

Ms. NORBY. I think, Mr. Chairman, it has been a fair criticism but it is one that the Smithsonian has been addressing. If you look at some of our more recent exhibitions, for instance the exhibition that opened just a couple of years ago on the presidency, that looks at presidents over time, so it gives a narrative, and looks at how leadership has changed as a result of circumstances. Or if you look at our most recent exhibition looking at our Nation at War. It is a large narrative, looking at war over our entire history. So I think that our recent exhibitions have worked with this.

There is another way we are dealing with it as we transform our museums, and that is through Web sites, developing hand-held devices that people can use while they are in the galleries. There are a lot of additional tools we have available to us now to extend that story beyond the museum visit itself.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you for that. The drama or the gripping part of America is that it is a great story. The reason the room fills up when David McCullough comes and the reason his book is at the top is because he tells a great story. And the stories have a beginning and they keep going and going, and it is just one thing after the other. As one political scientist said, most of our politics is about two things.

One is conflicts of principles in which almost all of us agree. For example equal opportunity versus rule of law, in the immigration debates we have in the Senate. We both agree on rule of law and we both agree on equal opportunity, but when we talk about illegal immigrants having drivers licenses, they conflict. And other principles conflict. So we debate that.

And then we are always debating what do we do when we fail to reach a great goal, what do we do about the failure to have a Federal law abolishing lynching in 1937; what do we do about not giving women the right to vote for such a long period of time. And we still say no child left behind. Even though we will never quite get there, we set these high goals and then deal with the disappointment. So I would hope that chronology and great narratives are something that we could continue to put a spotlight on.

I want to thank each of you for your contribution today in helping us put a spotlight on the importance of U.S. history and civics and the civic role of our public schools. I want to invite you to continue. There are a number of us interested in this and we are going to keep lifting up the subject as much as we can without getting the Federal Government improperly involved in the administration of local schools, which all of us are wary of.

We look forward to further suggestions that you have. I hope very much, Dr. Smith, that we can work with you and NAGB and pass this legislation, which would, at least in the 8th grade and perhaps in the 12th as well, permit 10 States to put a focus on achievements in U.S. history and in civics.

Let me invite each of you, to wind up the hearing, I am going to give you each 60 seconds, Dr. Smith and then Ms. Norby and

Mr. Parisi, and if you have anything you would like to say to conclude the hearing, I would like to invite you to do that now.

Mr. SMITH. Well, thank you, Senator. Let me say again how much we appreciate this opportunity to be a part of this hearing and also for the consideration that has been given to NAEP and the Nation's Report Card to be an important ingredient in your overall initiative. We would certainly welcome continuing dialogue with you. And I want to say again that, while we can't be in a position of promoting legislation, we can certainly be in a position of responding to it. And if this is a successful effort, as we hope it will be, you can be assured that we will give it a 100 percent effort in getting it implemented, and I think it would be a step in the right direction.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Ms. Norby?

Ms. NORBY. Thank you for giving us this opportunity, and we look forward to working with you. There is an enormous challenge to continue to prepare teachers for their responsibilities in the classroom and to reinvigorate their teaching. I think what the Smithsonian in particular has to offer is, through our resources, the ability to inspire the teachers, and then through the teachers the students. So we look forward to committing those resources to the continued improvement of teaching of history and civics.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Mr. Parisi?

Mr. PARISI. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here. The Shanker Institute Report is constructive criticism on the 48, soon to be 49, State standards. We think that passage of your legislation and having a more frequent assessment would be yet another piece of important information for all States to look at so that they can strengthen their State standards and that student achievement would increase. So thank you again for raising this important issue, and thanks for letting me speak today.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, and the hearing is adjourned.

[Additional material follows.]

## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THEODORE K. RABB

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, among the many issues and concerns that face the United States and its Government today, none has larger implications for the future health of our democracy than the one that bill S. 860 addresses: namely, our citizens' understanding of America's past.

Behind the grim statistics of student ignorance that are cited in the bill lie a series of basic educational conditions that make it unlikely the situation will soon improve. Indeed, a few months ago some 30 of the Nation's leading historians, joined by a number of public figures, signed a statement entitled "Crisis in History". They emphasized the need for urgent action to remedy the serious decline in attention to history in our schools, and the related lack of adequate preparation among our teachers. Over 550 teachers and academic historians have since signed the statement, and a copy, together with a list of the original signatories, has been sent to the committee's staff.

Even as the Teaching American History grant program in the Department of Education and the "We the People" initiative by the National Endowment for the Humanities indicate the commitment of the Federal Government to a citizenry informed about its past, the actual amount of time devoted to the subject in our classrooms is shrinking and the qualifications demanded of teachers are eroding.

As a result, not only are there inadequate opportunities in our schools to give students a better grounding in history, but the content of what they are taught leaves much to be desired. Teachers often lack the necessary credentials, the emphasis on general "Social Studies" reduces serious consideration of history, and books and other classroom materials fall far short of the standards we should expect.

It will take a major effort to turn this situation around, but bill S. 860 is at least an important first step. Testing may not be the answer to all problems, but the comparative NAEP data that the bill requires will provide essential information on which future policies can be built. As the former chair of the National Council for History Education, and the originator of the "Crisis in History" statement, I applaud Senators Alexander and Kennedy for introducing this bill, and enthusiastically endorse its passage.

[Whereupon, at 4:45 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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